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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT- SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

11. (U) AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH CARDINAL BOZANIC, PRAISES
PLANNED JASENOVAC VISIT: Among his introductory calls with
local leaders, Ambassador Foley met on September 21 with the
head of the Catholic Church in Croatia, Cardinal Josip
Bozanic. The Cardinal and Ambassdor discussed the important
role both the U.S. and the Church play in helping Croatia on
its path towards EU accession, fighting the challenges of
corruption in society, and easing the burden of economic
hardship in Croatia. The Ambassador also praised the
Cardinal for his planned September 24 visit to Jasenovac, the
site of the largest concentration camp in Croatia during
WWII. Bozanic is the highest ranking church official to ever
visit Jasenovac and his trip is seen as an important step
towards reconciliation. (JNCALLAHAN)

12. (U) OPPOSITION CANDIDATE JOSIPOVIC AHEAD IN PRESIDENTIAL
RACE, BUT BY HOW MUCH?: Recent polling is consistent on two
points. The Social Democratic Party candidate, Ivo
Josipovic, is in the lead. And second place is closely
contested between President of the Croatian Chamber of
Commerce, Nadan Vidosevic, who is running as an independent,
and the Mayor of Zagreb, Milan Bandic, who has yet to
announce if he really intends to enter the race. The most
recent poll by PULS, Croatia's most respected polling agency,
indicates that Josipovic would gain about 30% of the votes in
the first round, while other polls have him leading but only
with about 22% of the vote. In most polls, Vidosevic and
Bandic both come in between 14-15% of the vote. Vesna Pusic,
candidate of the Croatian People,s Party and the most
prominent female candidate, is in third place in most polls
with about 10% of the vote. The candidate of the ruling
Croatian Democratic Union, Andrija Hebrang, is polling
between 7-8%. (DMEGES)

13. (U) AMBASSADOR VISITS SPLIT AND MEETS WITH SACEUR, MAYOR,
AND COUNTY PREFECT: Ambassador Foley travelled on September
22-23 to Croatia's second largest city, Split, for meetings
with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral James
Stavridis. Adm. Stavridis, together with Amb. Foley, had the
opportunity to observe a portion of the three-week long
special forces training exercise Jackal Stone. The
Ambassador also met with Split-Dalmatia County Prefect Ante
Sanader and Split Mayor Zeljko Kerum, where they primarily
discussed prospects for promoting economic ties between
Croatia and America. Finally, the Ambassador visited one of
Croatia's major shipbuilders, Brodosplit, and expressed
support for Croatia's ongoing efforts to privatize its
shipyards and increase their commercial competitiveness.
(DMEGES)

14. (U) PRESIDENT MESIC VISITS CUBA: President Mesic
travelled to Cuba on September 17, prior to attending the UN
General Assembly in New York. Mesic met with Cuban President
Raul Castro, the head of the one-party parliament, the
Minister for Science, and visited the Latin American School
of Medicine. During his visit Mesic promoted greater
Cuban-Croatian economic ties, but his hosts gave greater play

to his oblique criticism of U.S. economic sanctions against the island. This is Mesic's second visit to Cuba, the first having taken place in 2006 when he represented Croatia as an observer country at a meeting of the non-aligned movement. (JNCALLAHAN)

15. (U) TAFT GRANTS TOTALING 20,000 DOLLARS AWARDED FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS: Two local NGOs implementing programs to assist in the return and reintegration of refugees to Croatia signed grants on September 22 from the Taft Fund, a grants program managed by the Department,s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. The NGO "Our Life" currently provides needed medical and social assistance to approximately 200 elderly and/or infirm refugee returnee beneficiaries living in remote areas of the country heavily affected by the war. "Our Life" was awarded 10,000 USD to purchase a new vehicle. The NGO "Serb Democratic Forum" was awarded 10,000 USD to support its free legal aid program for refugees/returnees born in other parts of the former Yugoslavia attempting to gain citizenship in Croatia. The money will pay for cumbersome administrative and document fees that have obstructed the successful return and reintegration of a number of refugees. (JNCALLAHAN)
FOLEY